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PLEASE TOUCH MUSEUM ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF THE 14TH ANNUAL 'GREAT FRIEND TO KIDS AWARDS'

PHILADELPHIA, PA – Please Touch Museum, the Children’s Museum of Philadelphia, is pleased to announce the winners of its 14th Annual Great Friend to Kids (GFTK) Awards, honoring individuals and organizations making outstanding contributions to enriching the lives of children. The awards will be presented at a ceremony at Memorial Hall on Thursday, November 19 from 6:30–10:00 p.m. All proceeds from the 14th Annual GFTK Awards will support Please Touch Museum’s exhibits and programs for young children and their families.

“The five individuals and organizations recognized this year are truly Great Friends to Kids,” says Nancy Kolb, President and CEO of Please Touch Museum. “They have inspired, served, educated, entertained and enriched the lives of children, and by recognizing their efforts we hope to inspire others to make similar efforts in the community.”

This year’s winners are:

Phillie Phanatic
Anne Hamilton
Shire Pharmaceuticals
Cordella Hauser
Tom Toscani

The ceremony will feature cocktails and heavy hors d’oeuvres, as well as a short video featuring each recipient and their contribution to the community. Each of the winners will be presented with a special award designed by Philadelphia artist Leo Sewell, creator of Please Touch Museum’s own “Artie the Elephant” and the Statue of Liberty Arm & Torch created entirely from discarded toys.

The Great Friend to Kids Award was initiated in 1991 by the Association of Children’s Museums to honor individuals who have made outstanding contributions toward strengthening education for children. National Great Friend to Kids Award winners include Fred Rogers and Marian Wright Edelman. Please Touch began presenting its own award in 1996 to coincide with the museum’s 20th birthday. Past winners include the Philadelphia Eagles Youth Partnership; Sheryl Leach, creator of Barney; Alex Scott, Founder of Alex’s Lemonade Stand; the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program; Carolyn Johnson, Founder and Executive Director of the National Adoption Center; NBA All-Star Dikembe Mutombo; Carter and Pat Merbreier of *Captain Noah and His Magical Ark*, among others. Most recently, Nancy Kolb was presented with the Great Friend to Kids Lifetime Achievement Award on October 3, 2008.

More about the 2009 winners...

Phillie Phanatic

Since debuting in 1978, the Phillie Phanatic has become a Philadelphia icon. Whether he’s dancing in front of the opposing team’s dugout, shooting hot dogs or practicing his baseball skills, the Phanatic is a constant source of pleasure and amusement for children.

The Phanatic has supported numerous local and national charities over the years and has brought smiles to the faces of children and adults who need it most. Accord to the Phillies, this feathery green creature has become the dean of all professional sports mascots. He has traveled to Japan, Australia, Mexico, Canada, Venezuela, and Puerto

Rico and has appeared on the “Today” show, “Good Morning America,” and “The Regis and Kathy Lee Show.” The loveable mascot is also at the center of the popular Phanatic Children’s Book Series, which follows the adventures of baseball’s silliest mascot.

Anne Hamilton

Mrs. Hamilton will receive a *Lifetime Achievement Award* for the many contributions she has made in support of children. Mrs. Hamilton has served on the museum’s Board of Directors for over 20 years and is active in several organizations, including: The Franklin Institute, The Philadelphia Antique Show, Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Steppingstones, American Heart Association, Thomas Jefferson Hospital’s Kimmel Cancer Center, The Philadelphia Zoo and Dragon Fly Forest. She also devotes her time when she is out of the Philadelphia region to causes in Newport, Florida, Colorado and Antigua.

Shire Pharmaceuticals

Shire Pharmaceuticals of Wayne, PA has made an immense impact on the youth community by bringing media attention to and supporting major issues our youth face. In September 2008, Shire facilitated a region-wide collection called “The Big Give” held in conjunction with Tredyffrin Township’s Community Day, drives were set up at local churches, synagogues, athletic leagues, and neighborhood centers to collect clothes, shoes, toys, games and books for the Cradles to Crayons program. Also in 2008, Shire increased their contribution to the City by making a \$100,000 commitment to the Department of Recreation to support the opening of city swimming pools in Summer 2009. Additionally, Shire sponsored a day of free play at Please Touch Museum this April where nearly 1,700 children under 12 years of age attended for free.

Cordella Hauser

Youth Director, Grace Temple Church

Ms. Cordella Hauser was raised and educated in Philadelphia and has worked for Grace Temple Church for over 35 years as their National Church Mother, Youth Coordinator, Coordinator for Young People Willing Workers, manager of the Youth Choir, the church liaison with the Philadelphia Food Bank through Philabundance, and the Director of Summer Vacation Bible School. In 1989, she opened her own nursery in the church that, despite its daycare-nature, implemented a curriculum in math, science, English, history, music, art, and cooking. Ms Hauser is known to her community as a teacher, a preacher, a licensed Child Development Associate, an inspiration to kids of all races and ages, a mentor, a role model, a tutor, and someone who is completely dedicated to the health, safety, education, and nurturing of children of all backgrounds.

Tom Toscani

Lawyer and Volunteer Extraordinaire

Tom Toscani is a coach, mentor, energetic worker and volunteer who has been the driving force and consummate leader of numerous local associations in his community. As President of the Berwyn Paoli Little League Program, Tom campaigned and successfully partnered with Philadelphia Electric to develop land for his “Field of Dreams” complex – a response to lack of playing space for kids in the league. Under his leadership, a magnificent facility was born that is used regularly by hundreds of children, from tee ball to high school. Tom is also the host of “Challenger Day,” an annual event featuring baseball games and activities for children with special needs, run by volunteers of all ages. Tom also chairs many boards, including the Waynesborough Country Club, Easttown Township Park and Recreation Board, and Main Line Chamber of Commerce.

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Media sponsors are WPVI-TV, The Philadelphia Inquirer, Philadelphia Daily News, and Philly.com.

Tickets to the 14th Annual Great Friend to Kids Awards are still available, and start at \$150. To purchase tickets, contact Laura Stanley at 215-581-3160 or Istanley@pleasetouchmuseum.org.

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Please Touch Museum® at Memorial Hall, Fairmount Park is dedicated to enriching the lives of children by providing learning opportunities through play. Recognized locally and nationally as one of the best children's museums, Please Touch is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. and Sundays 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Admission is \$15 for adults and children age one and over. Children under one are free. For more information, please call 215-581-3181, or visit our web site at www.pleasetouchmuseum.org.